



Irma S. Raker

First woman prosecutor in Montgomery County. Second woman judge on the District Court for Montgomery County. Third woman judge on the Circuit Court for Montgomery County

Irma S. Raker was born in Brooklyn, New York, where her father was a prominent attorney. She attended Midwood High School and earned her B.A. from Syracuse University in 1959, where she was elected to Pi Sigma Alpha Fraternity, the National Political Science Honorary Society. Later that year she studied at the Hague Academy of International Law. In 1960, she married Samuel K. Raker, and deferred law school while raising their children. In 1969, Raker entered the Washington College of Law at American University, where she received her Juris

Doctor degree in 1972. During law school, she worked as an editor on the Law Review, was recipient of the Lura E. Turley Prize, for outstanding women on law review, and was three times honored as the top student in a course. Raker worked hard to balance her education and family life. She considered raising her three children while attending law school as her greatest personal accomplishment. Raker has maintained a permanent association with the Washington College of Law by serving as an adjunct professor, teaching trial practice.

In 1973, Raker was admitted to the Maryland Bar. That year, Montgomery County State's Attorney Andrew L. Sonner hired Raker as the first woman prosecutor in the history of Montgomery County. During her six years tenure with the State's Attorney's Office, she became a mentor and counselor to many women who followed her steps into the State's Attorney's Office. In 1979, Raker entered private practice as a partner in the Washington, D.C. law firm of Sachs, Greenebaum, and Tayler, where she remained until 1980. That year, Governor Harry Hughes appointed Raker to serve as a Judge on the District Court of Maryland, sitting in Montgomery County. Two years later, he appointed her to the position of Associate Judge in the Montgomery County Circuit Court. The voters of Montgomery County then elected Judge Raker to a fifteen year term on the Circuit Court in November of 1982. During her position as a trial judge, Judge Raker was known for her incredible intellectual power as well as her standard of fairness, which she applied to every case. She remained on the Circuit Court until Governor William Donald Schaefer appointed her in 1993 to the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the State's highest court.

Raker's appointment to the Court of Appeals was significant for several reasons. She became the only judge from Montgomery County on either the Court of Appeals or the Court of Special Appeals. In addition, Raker became the second woman to sit on the Court of Appeals. Women's groups throughout the state lauded her appointment. In 1995, the Women's Bar Association of Maryland honored Raker with the prestigious Rita C. Davidson Award. The annual Davidson Award is presented to an individual who has contributed to the honor and integrity of the legal profession by advancing the interests of women in the practice of law.

Throughout her legal career, Raker has been known for her intellectual approach to the law as well as for her commitment to the issues related to women and children. As an Assistant State's Attorney, Judge Raker became a leading advocate in Montgomery County for victims of domestic violence and child abuse

at a time when the law enforcement community was only just beginning to acknowledge the devastating nature of these crimes. She worked vigorously to bring domestic violence and child abuse issues onto the public agenda. As a prosecutor, Raker worked closely with the police department in creating a standardized evidence gathering kit to be used in rape and sexual assault cases. She also participated in the major revision of the criminal laws of the State dealing with sexual assault. Raker was an active member of the Montgomery County Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Montgomery County Advisory Committee on Battered Spouses, the Citizens Advisory Board for the Montgomery County Community Crisis Center, the Abused Person's Advisory Committee, and the Montgomery County Sexual Offense Committee. She also worked closely with the Department of Health to establish the Rape Crisis Center and she served as a member of its Board of Directors. In addition, Raker has served on the Attorney General's and Lieutenant Governor's Family Violence Council since 1995.

As a judge, Raker serves as the chairperson of the Judicial Compensation Committee of the Maryland Judicial Conference. She was elected to the Executive Committee of the Maryland Judicial Conference and serves as a member of the Maryland Committee to Revise Article 27, the criminal code of Maryland. She was a member of the Commission to Study Bail Bond and Surety Industry in Maryland and chaired the District Court Committee on Criminal Law and Motor Vehicle Matters. Judge Raker is a faculty member of the Maryland Judicial Institute.

Raker has participated in many professional and civic organizations. She is a member of the Maryland State Bar Association, American Bar Association, Montgomery County Bar Association, Women's Bar Association of Maryland, the International Academy of Trial Judges, American Inns of Court, American Judicature Society, and the American Law Institute. Raker serves as chairperson of the Maryland Pattern Jury Committee of the Maryland State Bar Association. She is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a fellow of the Maryland State Bar Association. She is a member of the National Association of Women Judges and served as its Maryland Chapter president in 1994.

In recognition of her leadership and commitment, Raker has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors. In 1985, she received the Pioneer Women Na'amat for outstanding service on behalf of victims of family violence. In 1989, she was honored by the Women Legislators of Maryland for her contributions to the advancement and welfare of women in Maryland. In 1994, she received the Ninth Annual Dorothy Beatty Memorial Award from the Women's Law Center for her significant contribution to women's rights. In 1995, she received the Award of Appreciation from the New York Bar Foundation and the Margaret Brent Trailblazer's Award from the American Bar Association. In 1996, she was named to Who's Who of American Law, and honored as an Outstanding Alumnus Spokesperson and Jurist by the Syracuse University Alumni Club of Greater Baltimore. Three times (1997, 1998, and 1999), the Maryland Daily Record named Raker to its annual list of Maryland's Top 100 Women, placing her in their "Circle of Excellence." In October 1998, she received the Elizabeth Dole Achievement Award from the Montgomery Chapter of the American Red Cross, awarded to "a woman who has broken through the 'glass ceiling,' overcoming obstacles in the workplace, and [who] has distinguished herself as a true leader and achiever." In 1999, the Girl Scouts of Central Maryland presented her with their Distinguished Women's Award. That same year Raker received the Century of Service Award from the Montgomery County Bar Association and honors from two of her alma matters: the Distinguished Alumna Award from Washington College of Law of the American University, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Midwood High School Alumni Association. In October 2000, she was honored as an Outstanding Jurist by the Montgomery County Bar Association.

SOURCES:

- The Montgomery County Historical Society Library
- www.mdarchives.state.md.us
- www.mddailyrecord.com/top100w/